

imbibe

LIQUID CULTURE

Cork vs. Screw Cap

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fuss about?

6 DELICIOUS BEER TRENDS

**GREAT COFFEE IN
UNEXPECTED PLACES**

**AMAZING COCKTAIL
& FOOD PAIRINGS**



Sappy Story

Maple syrup sweetens up the bar

STEP ASIDE, MRS. BUTTERWORTH. Relegated to the ignoble role of smothering Eggos at the breakfast table, maple syrup has fallen on hard times. But while corn syrup-based imitations rule today's market, real maple syrup has a long culinary heritage—one that's being rediscovered by today's more adventurous mixologists.

The condensed sap from maple trees was the primary sweetener in much of North America until well into the 19th century, especially in eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. Maple sugar was the main product, made from boiling maple sap until the water evaporated and then placing the residue in molds to form loaves. Even after cheap cane sugar became widely available, maple sugar was still the sweetener of choice in parts of Canada and the Northeast, and enjoyed renewed popularity during the Civil War and World War II, when cane sugar was in limited supply.

But maple products weren't only used to sweeten cakes and tea. Workers fortified themselves with sap beer during the annual harvest, and in the 19th century a type of maple rum was distilled in parts of New England and upstate New York. And while cane sugar was supplanting maple sugar in the early years of the republic (making syrup the main maple product), the old-style sweetener undoubtedly found its way into assorted punches, egg-nogs and flips.

Today, maple-growing regions continue to contribute products to the bar: Maison des Futailles in Quebec produces Fine Sève, a maple eau de vie, and Sortilège, a maple liqueur with a Canadian whisky base; Ontario's Kittling Ridge makes a similar liqueur called Oh Canada; and Vermont Spirits distills a vodka from maple sap. Maple fans may also wish to try Amber, a liqueur that marries the flavor of maple and pecans to a base of Macallan Scotch whisky.

While loaves of maple sugar are largely things of the past, a handful of intriguing cocktail recipes utilize maple syrup. Classic sour-style drinks such as the Brown Derby, the Maple Leaf and the Applejack Rabbit use maple syrup as a complex sweetener to counterbalance the tartness of citrus juice. Contemporary bartenders are also using the flavor to good effect: maple syrup lends Applejack Old Fashioneds extra gravitas at Green Street in Cambridge, Mass. The venerable pancake-topper enters the exotic realm at Forbidden Island Tiki Lounge in Alameda, Calif., where it is mixed with Barbados rum and tawny port in the Dead Reckoning. Maple syrup is also being morphed by molecular mixology, as when it is converted into a thick, white foam that tops the bourbon-rich Vessel 75s at Vessel, in Seattle.

But keep the Log Cabin away from your cocktail shaker—only real maple syrup will do. When mixed in a drink such as the rye whiskey-

Applejack Rabbit (back)

Applejack and maple syrup are a classic combination; the syrup not only sweetens, but lends additional complexity to the drink.

1 1/2 oz. applejack
1/4 oz. fresh orange juice
1/4 oz. fresh lemon juice
1/4 oz. pure maple syrup
Ice cubes
Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: cocktail
Garnish: cherry or spiral-cut orange peel

Shake ingredients with ice. Strain into a chilled glass. Garnish.

The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks, *David Embury, 1948*

Maple Julep (right)

Philip Ward argues against muddling the mint in a julep; he advocates instead simply adorning the top of the glass with a generous arrangement of fresh mint sprigs.

2 oz. rye whiskey
1/4 oz. pure maple syrup
Fresh mint
Crushed ice
Tools: bar spoon
Glass: julep cup (a tall highball will also work)
Garnish: mint sprigs

Add the liquid ingredients to a julep cup or glass, stir to dissolve the syrup, and gradually fill the cup with crushed ice. Garnish liberally with sprigs of fresh mint. Serve with a straw.

Philip Ward, Death & Company, New York

Dead Reckoning (left)

This drink was created for the Northwest Tiki Crawl in Portland, Ore.

2 oz. Cocksbur 12-year-old rum
1/2 oz. Navan vanilla liqueur
1/2 oz. pure maple syrup
1/2 oz. tawny port
1 oz. fresh lemon juice
1 oz. pineapple juice
1 dash Angostura bitters
1 oz. soda water
Crushed ice
Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: highball
Garnish: pineapple wedge, mint sprig, spiral-cut lemon peel

Add everything except soda water to a cocktail shaker, shake with ice and strain into an ice-filled glass. Top with soda water. Garnish.

Martin Cate, Forbidden Island Tiki Lounge, Alameda, Calif.

